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News Release ~ Communiqué

Alexander Mackenzie Voyageur Route proclaimed a national legacy

GRANDE PRAIRIE, February 20, 1995 A vital and integral part of Canadian heritage was officially recognized today by the proclamation of the Alexander Mackenzie Voyageur Route as a national legacy. The announcement was made by Edmonton East MP Judy Bethel, on behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Michel Dupuy.

The proclamation, signed by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Minister Dupuy, was presented to volunteer John Woodworth, Executive Secretary of the Alexander Mackenzie Voyageur Association.

Over 200 years have passed since explorer Alexander Mackenzie, with a team of French- Canadian Voyageurs and Native people, spearheaded the first-ever recorded transcontinental voyage of North America by a European a voyage which shaped the Canada we know today by opening up our land for the commercial trade and settlement that followed.

"The Alexander Mackenzie Voyageur Route illustrates the very spirit of the Canadians who built this country the Aboriginal peoples, French-Canadian Voyageurs and Europeans," said Mrs. Bethel. "Celebrating this outstanding historical achievement is particularly fitting on Heritage Day, a time for all Canadians to think about their shared heritage."

Along the 8,600 km route from Quebec City to Bella Coola, British Columbia, numerous national historic sites and plaques may be seen. The route also passes through two national parks (Pukaskwa and Wood Buffalo) and five Canadian heritage rivers (French, Mattawa, Boundary Waters, Churchill and Clearwater). These rivers comprise 900 km of the route, affording other adventurous Canadians the opportunity to paddle their way through this country's heritage.

Mr. Woodworth reminds us : "It's not just a recreational waterway. The six provinces through which the Route passes have historic sites, old towns and parks. In the Atlantic region, there is the Old Port of Quebec City on the St. Lawrence River. Ottawa, the Nation's Capital, should be seen by all. At the west end of Lake Superior, is Ontario's reconstructed Old Fort William, and nearby Grand Portage. Winnipeg, on the Red River, has rebuilt its historic fur trade waterfront. Saskatchewan has 347 km of unspoiled canoeing country on the Churchill River. Isolated Wood Buffalo National Park in the Peace River region is a World Heritage Site. And near the Pacific, are the spectacular Rainbow Mountains of Tweedsmuir Park, and then the coastal rain forest and fjords. Just a few high points."

This unprecedented voyage, occurring thirteen years before a similar expedition in the United States, was a major factor in the economic development of Western Canada and in the establishment of Canada from sea-to-sea. Today, this route presents new economic opportunities as a heritage tourism destination.

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